

Students with disabilities, like all students, must have the opportunity to fully participate in all aspects of education (e.g., academic, social, vocational). Being able to effectively communicate with others is critical in this process. Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams are **required** to consider the communication needs of **all** students with disabilities and address any identified needs through the student's IEP. Individual Accommodation Plan (IAP) teams must address the communication needs of students eligible for Section 504 services and document necessary accommodations on the student's IAP.

The tools in this document should be used for **all** students experiencing communication barriers as a result of his/her disability, including those who:

- are classified as Deaf/Hard of Hearing or Deaf/Blind (refer to Act 250);
- have limited or no verbal skills; **or**
- have other significant impairments in the areas of [receptive](#) and/or [expressive](#) language, including but not limited to impairments in the areas of apraxia, articulation/phonology, fluency, pragmatics, or auditory processing.

This tools in this document will help IEP/IAP teams:

- 1) determine a student's current language and communication needs;
- 2) establish an individualized communication plan that ensures the student is able to fully participate in all aspects of his/her education; and
- 3) remain in compliance with:
 - [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act \(IDEA 2004\)](#)
 - [Louisiana Act 250 \(2015\) Louisiana Deaf Child's Bill of Rights](#)
 - [American with Disabilities Education Act](#)

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FACTORS TO CONSIDER IN PLANNING FOR COMMUNICATION AND LANGUAGE SUPPORT

The questions in Sections I, II and III should be used to facilitate a discussion among all IEP/IAP team members in identifying a student’s **current** communication abilities and needs. The information gathered in these sections should be used to develop an action plan that supports the student’s communication and language development needs.

SECTION I: LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION NEEDS

1. Identify each of the following*:
 - a. Student’s primary language at home _____
 - b. Student’s primary language at school _____
 - c. Family’s primary language _____

*Note: Possible considerations include spoken English, spoken language other than English, [emerging/no formal language skills](#) identified, American Sign Language (ASL), signed language other than ASL, manually coded English, or cued speech.
2. The student’s **current** primary [mode of communication](#) is one or more of the following (check all that apply).
Note: Check communication modes that are most frequently used and preferred by the student to receive communication and express ideas across settings. Describe any differences in modes used across environments.

RECEPTIVE	MODE ACROSS ENVIRONMENTS (describe)
<input type="checkbox"/> Auditory/oral	<input type="checkbox"/> All classrooms _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Signing (ASL, English)	<input type="checkbox"/> Extracurricular and other school environments _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Cued language	<input type="checkbox"/> Related services _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Tactile system (describe) _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Community _____
<input type="checkbox"/> No tech (describe) _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Home _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Low tech system (describe) _____	
<input type="checkbox"/> High tech system (describe) _____	
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (describe) _____	

NOTE: For students with emerging or unconventional communication methods, describe in detail, provide pictures/video images, etc.

EXPRESSIVE	MODE ACROSS ENVIRONMENTS (describe)
<input type="checkbox"/> Auditory/oral <input type="checkbox"/> Signing (ASL, English) <input type="checkbox"/> Cued language <input type="checkbox"/> Tactile system (describe) _____ <input type="checkbox"/> No tech (describe) _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Low tech system (describe) _____ <input type="checkbox"/> High tech system (describe) _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Other (describe) _____	<input type="checkbox"/> All classrooms _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Extracurricular and other school environments _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Related services _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Community _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Home _____

NOTE: For students with emerging or unconventional communication methods, describe in detail, provide pictures/video images, etc.

3. [Communicative competence](#) is an individual's ability to freely express ideas, thoughts, and feelings to a variety of listeners across contexts. In the table below, indicate the student's current communicative competence in terms of language and communication mode with the respective communication partners. Rate each on a scale of 1-5, with 1 = Emergent and 5 = Mastery. If the student is not approaching mastery (e.g., rated "4" or "5") in a category, what changes and/or supports (e.g., [augmentative and alternative](#)) are needed?

	LANGUAGE	MODE OF COMMUNICATION	COMMENTS:
	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	
	Emergent Mastered	Emergent Mastered	
FAMILY/CAREGIVERS			
SCHOOL STAFF			
PEERS			

SECTION II: OPPORTUNITIES FOR COMMUNICATION

1. The following questions are intended to help IEP/IAP teams understand the students current ability to communicate with others.
 - a. How are opportunities provided throughout the day (both academic and social contexts) for the student to interact with peers who do not experience communication barriers?

 - b. If a student's communication system/supports are not available (e.g., battery failure on a device, interpreter not present) what are the back-up or alternate strategies to facilitate communication?

 - c. How do educators, family members and peers model the use of the child/student's communication system? Describe the procedures used.

 - d. How is the student's independent and authentic use (e.g., used in a functional manner) of the communication system encouraged and instructed? What strategies and techniques are in place?

 - e. Are communication challenges of the student contributing to behavior problems the student may be experiences/exhibiting? If yes, describe the behavior plan (including supports to address related communication challenges).

NOTE: Questions 2a and 2b below are applicable *ONLY* to students who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing.

2a. Describe how the student uses [direct communication](#) across contexts.

	SCHOOL STAFF	PEERS
INSTRUCTIONAL SETTINGS		
ASSESSMENTS		
EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES		

2b. Does the teacher provide [direct instruction](#) in the student's primary language/mode of communication?

SECTION III: CLASSROOM CONSIDERATIONS

1. What language and communication supports are currently used to help the student participate and make progress in the general education curriculum? Check all that apply.

Instruction delivered directly by a teacher proficient in the language(s) and communication mode(s) identified in Section I.

Instruction delivered through the use of a qualified interpreter/[transliterater](#) using:

[American Sign Language Interpreting](#)

[Oral Interpreting](#)

[Cued Language Transliterating](#)

[Intervener](#)

[English Transliterating](#)

[Oral Language Facilitating](#)

[Tactile Interpreting](#)

Other (describe) _____

Instruction using one or more of the following assistive devices/services:

[Captioned Media](#)

[CART](#)

[C-Print](#)

[FM system](#)

[Hearing aid/cochlear implant monitoring](#)

[Intervener](#)

Note taking

[Sound field system](#)

[No tech](#)
(describe) _____

[Low tech system](#)
(describe) _____

[High tech system](#)
(describe) _____

Other (describe) _____

What additional language and communication supports are needed to help the student participate and make progress in the general education curriculum?

ACTION PLAN: COMMUNICATION AND LANGUAGE SUPPORT

The action plan should focus on how the student will communicate with others and how others will communicate with the student. For students receiving special education services, the information in this plan should be captured in the *Communication Needs* section of the student’s IEP and used to assist in the development of communication goals and objectives. For students with an IAP, this information should be used to determine what accommodations a student will require related to his/her communication needs.

1. Based upon the team’s findings, describe how the student’s [receptive](#) and [expressive](#) language skills impact his/her ability to fully participate in all aspects of education (e.g., academic, social, vocational).
2. Describe the language and [mode of communication](#) the student will use across contexts.

	LANGUAGE	MODE
INSTRUCTIONAL SETTINGS		
ASSESSMENTS		
EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES		

3. What assistive technology must the student use to access the general education curriculum?

4. Describe how the student’s receptive and expressive communication support needs will be addressed. Include detailed information about any augmentative or alternative supports to be provided.

ENVIRONMENTS	
SOCIAL CONTEXTS	
INSTRUCTIONAL CONTENT AREAS	

5. Describe how the following individuals will support the student with increasing his/her receptive and expressive communication skills (including language and vocabulary):

TEACHERS	
SCHOOL STAFF	
PARENTS/CAREGIVERS	
PEERS	

6. What type of training in the student’s communication system is needed by educators or family members? (**Note:** Educator training needs can be documented in the IEP on the Program Services page under “Supports Needed for School Personnel.”)

NOTE: Question 7 below is applicable ***ONLY*** to students who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing.

7. Describe how the student uses [direct communication](#) in areas listed below.

INSTRUCTION	
ASSESSMENT	
EXTRACURRICULAR/SOCIAL SETTINGS	

8. What role will the student play in managing his/her communication system?
9. Describe how the student’s progress in communication skill development (including language and mode of communication) will be routinely assessed (including on the Progress Report).

APPENDIX A: FREQUENTLY USED TERMS

American Sign Language (ASL) - A visual language used by deaf and hard of hearing people in the United States and Canada. ASL has syntactic (grammar/sign order), phonological (structure and organization of signs), morphological (how signs relate to one another), and semantic (how language structures meaning) rules that are distinct from English.

American Sign Language Interpreting - The process of a third party (interpreter) facilitating communication between persons who are hearing and persons who are deaf or hard of hearing by providing an interpretation of communication while working between spoken English and American Sign Language.

ASHA - American Speech-Language-Hearing Association

Assistive Listening Devices - Any and all types of devices that increase the sound and aid in the understanding of speech. These devices may include personal hearing aids, frequency modulation (FM) systems, induction loop systems, infrared, special inputs for telephone or television and amplified alarms and signals.

Auditory/Oral Mode of Communication -The development of speech and verbal language through the maximized use of residual hearing. An Auditory/Oral approach allows for visual cues, typically speech reading. An Auditory/Verbal approach focuses specifically on residual hearing and would not encourage relying upon visual cues.

Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) - Addresses the needs of individuals with significant and complex communication disorders. AAC uses a variety of techniques and tools, including picture communication boards, line drawings, speech-generating devices (SGDs), tangible objects, manual signs, gestures, and finger spelling, to help the individual express thoughts, wants and needs, feelings, and ideas. AAC is augmentative when used to supplement existing speech, and alternative when used in place of speech that is absent or not functional (ASHA).

C-Print - Printed text of spoken English displayed in real time similar to open captioning. It is an effective means of acquiring information for some individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing. C-Print provides a text of spoken information that is meaning-for-meaning rather than a verbatim transcription.

Captioned Media - Includes filmstrips, films, videos, etc., that have the spoken word or the visual intent of the media represented by written language displayed on the screen as it is occurring.

CART (Communication Access Real-time Translation) - The simultaneous verbatim translation of the spoken word into English text using a stenotype machine, notebook computer and real time software, which displays the text on a laptop computer, monitor or screen. CART service is often provided in classroom settings for a student who is deaf or hard of hearing.

Central Auditory Processing - Disorder (CAP-D) - Deficits in the information processing of audible signals not attributed to impaired peripheral hearing sensitivity or intellectual impairment. This information processing involves perceptual, cognitive, and linguistic functions that, with appropriate interaction, result in effective receptive communication of auditorily presented stimuli. Specifically, CAPD refers to limitations in the ongoing transmission, analysis, organization, transformation, elaboration, storage, retrieval, and use of information contained in audible signals.(AHS, <http://www.asha.org/policy/RP1993-00208/>)

Cochlear Implant - A device that provides direct electrical stimulation to the auditory (hearing) nerve in the inner ear. Children and adults with a severe to profound hearing loss who cannot be helped with hearing aids may be helped with cochlear implants. (ASHA, 2017)

Communicative Competence - An individual's ability to freely express ideas, thoughts, and feelings to a variety of listeners across contexts.

- When assessing a student's level of communicative competence in terms of "communication mode," an emergent level is one where the student needs prompting to use his/her mode to communication or uses his/her present mode of communication with only a few communication partners. A mastered level is one where the student independently or spontaneously uses his/her present mode to communicate.
- When assessing a student's level of communicative competence in terms of "language," an emergent level is one in which the student demonstrates functionally limited knowledge in all areas of language (including phonology, syntax, semantics and pragmatics). A mastered level is one in which the student has functionally adequate knowledge and skills in all areas of language (including phonology, syntax, semantics and pragmatics).

Cued Language Transliterater - "A cued language transliterater isa professional who uses a cued language to facilitate communication between deaf and hearing individuals. Properly functioning cued language transliteraters provide deaf/hard-of-hearing consumers with comprehensive non-judgmental access to all audible components of a given environment."

Cued Speech (Language) - A system where children learn to both "see" and "hear" speech and language. They focus on the movements that the mouth makes when one talks. This is combined with (a) eight hand shapes called cues; and (b) four positions around the face, indicating vowel sounds. The hand cues help the child distinguish the sounds that look alike on the lips.

Cued Speech (Language) Transliteration - The process of a third party (transliterater) facilitating communication between persons who are hearing and persons who are deaf or hard of hearing by providing a transliteration of the communication by working between spoken English and Cued Speech.

Direct Communication – (NOTE: This definition provided here is specific to its use in reference to communication issues for students who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing). Communication that occurs without the assistance of communication devices or adults trained in a specific communication mode.

Direct Instruction – (NOTE: This definition provided here is specific to its use in reference to communication issues for students who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing). When instruction is delivered, received, and reciprocated by the teacher using the primary language of the learner who is Deaf/HH without the need of a third party (interpreter/transliterater) or medium (captioning).

Emerging/no formal language skills – For example, a personalized set of gestures used by an individual.

English Transliteration - A form of interpreting in which the language base remains the same (e.g., the transliteration of spoken English to a signed English system or to a form which can be read on the lips).

Expressive Communication - The process of expressing oneself (e.g., needs, wants, feelings, opinions) to others through verbal and nonverbal communication.

Fingerspelling - The representation of the alphabet by finger positions in order to spell out individual words or connected/longer strings of language.

FM System - An assistive listening device that transmits the speaker's voice via a microphone to an electronic receiver in which the sound is amplified and transmitted to the student's personal hearing aids or cochlear implant through direct audio input or through a loop cord worn around the neck. This reduces the problems of background noise interference and distance from the speaker.

Gestures - Movements of any part of the body (including facial expressions) to express or emphasize an idea, an emotion or a function. Add natural and/or contact gestures. A natural gesture example is when a child pushes an item away or reaches for an item. A contact gesture example is when a child takes a person's hand to activate a toy or takes a person's hand and leads them to a desired item or location.

Graphic Communication System: Use of pictures, photographs, line drawings, Blissymbols, printed words, or traditional orthography in the process of communication.

High tech AAC Systems - Systems which incorporate the use of electronic devices (e.g., speech generating devices, single-message devices and recordable/digitized devices) to support an individual's communication needs. This can include a single location voices output device to a high tech dynamic display device.

Incidental Learning - Unintentional or unplanned learning that results from other activities.

Intervener - Intercedes between a child and the environment, allowing access to information usually gained through vision and hearing. An Intervener facilitates learning and the development of skills (e.g., receptive and expressive communication, interactive behavior).

Low Tech AAC Systems – Systems which incorporate the use of pictures, objectives, photographs, writing, and/or communication boards/books to support an individual's communication needs, but which do not involve the use of electronic devices.

Mode of Communication - The medium or channel in which communicative intent is expressed and is received.

No Tech AAC Systems – Systems which incorporate the use of gestures, manual signs, facial expressions, vocalizations, verbalizations and body language.

Oral Interpreting - The art of moving the mouth in order to paraphrase what is being said; communicates the words of a speaker or group of speakers to an individual by inaudible mouth movements so that they can be read on the lips.

Oral Language Facilitator - A trained support personnel in the field of deaf education who understands hearing loss, the impact of hearing loss in the classroom and how it affects learning, and the hearing technology used by students from an auditory oral educational background. An Oral Language Facilitator directly and indirectly supports students with hearing loss participating in a regular education setting by employing instructional strategies that are part of best practice in auditory oral training.

Object/Picture Systems – Communication system which incorporates visual-graphic symbols (e.g., pictures, photographs, line drawings, Blissymbols, printed words, traditional orthography) that stand for or represent what an individual wants to express.

Primary Language - The language spoken in the home. It is the first language a person is exposed to from birth through the present.

Qualified Interpreter - A person who is trained to facilitate communication between two languages and who is qualified according to state or national standards. In Louisiana qualified educational interpreters should have ancillary certification from the Department of Education. They may also hold national Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf certification and have a qualifying score on the Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment.

Receptive Communication - The process of receiving and understanding a message/what others say or express.

Signed English - A system that was devised as a semantic representation of English for children between the ages of 1 and 6 years of age. ASL signs are used in English word order with 14 sign markers being added to represent a portion of the inflectional system of English.

Sound Field System - An environmental amplification system that utilizes a portable speaker system or placing a loudspeaker on one or more walls and/or ceiling. This type of system ensures that speech signal is evenly distributed throughout the classroom with the end goal of improving the signal to noise ratio for each student in the room.

Symbol Set Selection –Selecting the symbols to use for a student’s augmentative/alternative communication system based on the individual’s ability to access, recognize, and learn that symbol’s meaning. For example, a person with visual deficits will need a symbol that is modified to be viewable or that is accessible via other sensory modes such as listening or touch. Symbols are not universal across cultures. It is important to find symbols that are relevant to the individual and his or her community. Symbols systems should be flexible to allow for change in the student’s linguistic, cognitive, and physical abilities.

Tactile Interpreting - A method of interpreting for people who are both visually impaired and hard of hearing. The interpreter places his hands on the client’s hands and signs.

Tactile System - A communication system that uses the sense of touch to decode and encode language information. The tactilely decoded/encoded language information can be in the form of objects, pictures with raised surfaces, textures, Braille, etc. Current technology exists to allow for decoding and encoding verbal and graphic information into receptive and expressive tactile language systems.

APPENDIX B: RESOURCES FOR FAMILIES

Guiding Questions for Parents to Ask at IEP/IAP* Meetings

The questions below can be used by parents to help facilitate a meaningful discussion about their children's communication needs within the context of an IEP/IAP meeting.

1. How does my child communicate across all environments at school (challenges, strengths, and how you support him)? Describe how my child:
 - socially communicates with other students and adults
 - makes comments or expresses preferences, opinions, wants, likes, dislikes, feelings, ideas, etc.
 - let's you know what he/she knows or doesn't know about academic work
2. How do you know if my child is able to understand what others (peers and adults) are communicating to him/her?
3. Do communication challenges affect my child's social behavior in school? If so, what changes need to be made?
4. How can we use information about how my child communicates at home (challenges, strengths, ways in which we support him) in developing a plan to support his/her needs at school?
5. Are there other types of communication supports can we incorporate into the IEP/IAP to address my child's communication needs? Can you explain:
 - strategies that will be used to support my child's communication/language development needs?
 - options for assistive technology or AAC (augmentative or alternative communication) systems?
 - related services that my child might need to support his communication needs?
6. How will my child's progress on language/communication skills be measured this year? And what will we do if progress is not adequate?
7. How will my child's communication needs/progress from year to year be tracked as teachers and service providers change?
8. What can I do to support my child's language development and communication skills?

*An IEP is an Individualized Education Program which is developed for students who are eligible for special education services. An IAP is an Individualized Accommodation Plan which is developed for students who are Section 504 eligible.